592 /30 cont'd/
594 seems to be more prevalent. It is not uncommon to see a Miao
596 family of eight to ten people, of three generations, father, son, grandson, living in a single thatched hut.

592 A family at the least consists of a man, his wife, and their
593 children. The father is, of course, the head of the family, who is
562 in charge of the affairs of the whole family. Every member of the family must obey his directions in everyday family work, and even in personal behavior each receives his concern. For instance, in the
582 marriage of sons and daughters, although free choice as the basis of /
584 marriage is permitted in many cases, there are also many marriages which are arbitrarily determined by the head of the family. In the latter case, the children have no way of raising objections. Generally, the father in a Miao family is more powerful and respected than he is in a Li family.

593 There is a big difference in another aspect, the position of the
171 man and woman in the family. The Miao women are submissive. From what I have heard, this is completely different from the manner of the Li women. It is easy for a Miao husband to give orders to his wife while the Li husband is unable to do so. However,
595 it is rather strange that polygamy is completely forbidden among the Miao. Regardless of whether he is wealthy or not, or whether he has a son /31/ or not, a Miao husband can never take a second wife (i.e. concubine), unless his first wife has died. For instance, the Miao headman, Lu Tsun-ying, is generally considered to be wealthy and influential. He is already fifty years old and is still without an heir, but he has no intention of taking a concubine. We have not yet been able to point out clearly the background which has created this kind of rule. The following two points may serve as possible explanations. In the first place, the Miao have only a
182 limited area of land, and it is hard for them to make a living on it. Forbidding concubinage may serve to avoid the problem of overpopu-
582 lation. Secondly, they have strictly followed the rule of marriage within the group (i.e., a Miao may only marry a Miao). But the entire Miao population is not very large. In order to maintain a balance between the male and female population, monogamy must

/221 cont./

182 538 773 Especially among a people as mentally alert and of such high standing as the Meau, one can probably see in this fact an indication that we have here an economically-conditioned cultural loss. Poetry, like every free artistic activity, requires not only mental ability, but also security in the basic conditions of life. That the mental ability in any case is present among the Meau is attested to, in addition to the communications from Savina, by both the mental development of the children and, above all, the spiritual culture which both the Meau and the Akha have developed. People who need all their strength in order merely, with the hardest work, to avoid starvation, however, cannot possibly have the energy required for poetic invention. Traditional lore maintains itself longer, but it, too, disappears if there is not sufficient time and leisure to cultivate it.

773 [184] Nevertheless, among the Meau in Thailand I was able to record a number of legends which often are identical to a great extent with the corresponding myths and tales that other authors have recorded among the Meau in Tonkin. Accordingly, I am presenting the recorded material in the grouping most useful for comparative purposes. Concerning /222/ the origin of the human race, the following was reported to me:

In the beginning the earth was flooded by the ocean. When the water had gradually created its own pathways and earth became visible, a pair of siblings was living there. The brother impregnated the sister, and she gave birth to a gourd, which instead of seeds contained germ cells from which, in the course of time, human beings developed.

539 Lajonquière (1) and Abadie (2) also describe this episode,

1. II, p. 314.

2. Page 168.

but these authors state that the Meau have knowledge of the Deluge and the siblings were the only survivors of this natural catastrophe. Savina (3) also described the creation of human beings:

3. II, p. 244.